

Jeremy Mora

In conversation with Cynthia Houg

**How did you find your way to art?**

I have been writing since I was a teenager, mostly about my observations of the world. Then came mechanical engineering, followed by psychology. I have always been interested in people and wondering how they fit into the world. Why they do what they do, and the effects of bad decisions, uninformed decisions.

*Aside from sculpture, Mora also works with collage and drawing. Since 2005, Mora has been working on a series of collages, entitled "Imaginary Events and Places."*

**Why sculpture? How do the various parts of your practice (sculpture, collage, drawing) fit together?**

Sculpture came as a bi-product of painting. At the time [when I first began making sculptures], I was playing in my studio—making paintings about information and history. I was painting pictures of large stacks of paper—relatively realistic [in appearance] but situated in nondescript places. [These paintings] were super tedious and took months. The paint on these paintings was very thick and broke the 'picture plane.'

I was using lots of paint. There were many times where I would not use all of the paint at one sitting and it would dry on my palette. I had been reading a book called *Search for the Real* by Hans Hofmann. He talks about how every material has inherent characteristics and how an artist needed to be sympathetic to this. The book changed my awareness and way of looking quite a bit.

This book in addition to an amazing mentor was definitely a turning point. I started pack-ratting materials in my studio, saving things that were being used as references for paintings and thinking specifically about what the materials were "saying." From there sculptures just made sense to me. It was about the materiality of materials, what one material could say versus another. With painting I was making drawings and thinking about formal compositions, but with sculptures I got to play in the same space that my body exists in. Sculpture kidnapped me from painting.

How does it all fit together? Sculptures from drawings. Collages [are] about sculptures. Drawings from and/or for sculptures or collages. It's really a seemingly random combination. Sometimes I feel temporarily burned out on something and work in a completely different medium for a while.

*Intrigued by his unusual materials and whimsical touch, viewers often ask about Mora's working methods.*

**How do you begin working on a new piece? Does it begin with a sketch, or a piece of material?**

Sometimes an idea comes to me as a catchy or rhyming phrase. Sometimes I see a flash of a picture in my mind. I sometimes sit for hours and create tons of little drawings with one basic common denominator, a basic template for the form. Other times I am sitting in my studio stacking things or breaking things in hopes they will say something to me. It's quite an open and organic process in general. In some ways, I kind of never leave the mindframe of my work... or at least haven't in a while now. I'm often surprised at how much I can find in a little stack of what would otherwise seem to be trash. It's quite a fun game.

**Why dioramas and miniature landscapes?**

Miniatures came by accident as well, around the same time as when I encountered the Hans Hoffman book. I was tearing up books at the time, tearing out all of the pages. I would end up with just the binding and a stubby set of pages.

One day I was working on some plaster castings and happened to dip one of these book bindings in the plaster and pin it on my wall. It stayed there for quite a while. I walked into my studio at one point or another and it hit me - it looked like a little place - like layers of earth or something.

I bought some materials and embellished it a bit. From there I made several more and it has just taken off from there. They were really fun to make. When it got to the point of seeing that working at that scale could really 'work' I realized that I should probably figure out what it means to make small sculptures and think about how they operate - how they are experienced—that's when all the conceptual studying came in, lots and lots of lists of materials, characteristics, [considering the] ways we experience things in the world and our body's relation to space, also the history of small scale objects. It was, and is, endless.

*As always, we can't resist throwing in a question about Mora's influences.*

**Which artists do you admire? Who did you admire as a child? As a student?**

Far too many to list at this point. As a child, I admired my parents. My Dad is a master carpenter and an artist in so many ways. My Mom is a damn good writer - a poet. I learned quite a lot from both of them.

*Although viewers often ask Mora how he sources his materials, he keeps silent on his sources of "little people." They come, he said, from the "little people place."*

**Where do you find your materials?**

Everywhere.